

Maryland Department of Human Resources

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. Governor Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor Christopher J. McCabe, Secretary

Press Release

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MARYLAND STATE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE TOUGH ACTION ON GROUP HOMES

New measures will improve outcomes for Maryland children

Baltimore, MD (November 18, 2004) – The State of Maryland today outlined tough new measures for youth group homes in Maryland that will require 40 hours of mandatory training for staff, minimum monitoring standards and higher standards for facilities.

In a combined effort that includes the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), the State is imposing new measures to raise the standards for facilities that house some of the State's most vulnerable children.

"Maryland's children deserve the very best homes," Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., said. "It is unfortunate that, because of their circumstances, some children cannot live with their parents and are placed outside of their homes. In Maryland, we need to raise the bar for group homes to ensure that children get quality care, regardless of who provides for them."

Governor Ehrlich noted that Maryland has many outstanding youth group homes, such as Aunt Hattie's Place in Baltimore, where DHR Secretary Christopher J. McCabe and DHMH Secretary S. Anthony McCann outlined new regulations developed through the Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families.

Secretary McCabe said a new DHR action plan would address many of the shortcomings affecting the licensing and monitoring of the 187 homes under its purview. He said his Department would send letters to all operators it regulates to inform them of the tough, new regulations and outlining the enforcement standards.

"Hattie's Place and others, such as Daisy Field and Offspring, do an excellent job of nurturing our children and making sure their needs are met," Secretary McCabe said. "That is the standard we are requiring throughout Maryland. These are our children, and we will hold providers accountable when they are not treated well."

For Immediate Release

Secretary McCann said the new measures will assure that all administrators and staff members at Maryland youth group homes are qualified and have the necessary credentials to care for children.

“Our surveyors inspect the homes, document deficiencies in detail and, when appropriate, use enforcement tools as a means to gain corrective action and compliance,” Secretary McCann said. “We continue to enhance our efforts and know that by working together, we can do even more good for our children.

The Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families developed new regulations, with DHR, DHMH, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, and the nonprofit organizations Maryland Association of Residential Facilities for Youth and the Maryland Association of Non-Public Special Education Facilities. Highlights of the new regulations include:

- Requiring mandatory 40 hours of annual training of direct care staff to include medication management, suicide risk assessment and use of restraint, and core training requirements for new employees;
- Disqualifying license applicants convicted of a felony within 5 years of application and license applicants convicted of certain enumerated felonies regardless of the date of conviction;
- Establishing minimum monitoring, corrective action and sanctioning standards applicable to all agencies;
- Heightening requirements for physical plant standards, vehicular safety, use of restraints and other safety issues; and
- Enforcing stricter standards for the admission of new residents to ensure appropriate services.

“Governor Ehrlich is deeply committed to improving the quality of life for our children and youth, improving standards in group homes, and safeguarding our communities,” said M. Teresa Garland, Special Secretary for OCYF. “These regulations position Maryland in the forefront for establishing higher standards for group homes.”

The work of revising the core regulations is complete. The final, amended regulations will take effect on January 1, 2005.

Future initiatives include a Web-based automation of the group home “single point of entry” process and incentives to encourage the establishment of group homes in communities that have the greatest need. The State also will conduct a comprehensive study of group home capacity, demographic analysis of children requiring residential care, and a gap analysis of capacity and need by jurisdiction.

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